

U.S. Second Fleet / NATO Striking Fleet Atlantic

NATO'S COMBINED JOINT TASK FORCE CONCEPT

Endorsed by the Alliance at the Brussels Summit of January 1994, the NATO Combined Joint Task Force (CJTF) concept borrows heavily from the U.S. Joint Task Force model but expands upon it to include all nineteen NATO allies. Defined as a multinational, multi-service deployable task force generated and tailored for military operations not involving the defense of Alliance territory, a CJTF would place at the disposal of its commander an impressive array of allied forces. These could include ground forces up to the size of an army corps, multiple carrier/amphibious task forces, pertinent Special Forces (psychological and/or special warfare units) and the potential air campaign planning capability to conduct 1,000 sorties per day.

Primarily designed for non-Article Five Crisis Response Operations outside Alliance territory (conflict prevention, humanitarian aid, peacekeeping and peace enforcement), a CJTF may also be called upon to conduct many other short warning missions, such as non-combatant evacuation, disaster relief, and search and rescue. Simply put, the CJTF embodies a truly self-contained, fully functional, multi-service task force capable of conducting a wide range of military missions on NATO's behalf.*

Three NATO Commands - Regional Command North, Regional Command South, and Striking Fleet Atlantic (SFL) - are currently designated as CJTF Parent Headquarters. Of these, only SFL is sea-based, and the advantages of this are substantial. First, a sea-based CJTF HQ is easier and faster to move. It provides rapid crisis response and can operate over greater distances without additional command echelons. Secondly, SFL offers the political leadership a pliable and flexible diplomatic tool. It can hover off the coast sending a subtle deterrence message or it can command forces ashore, signaling a far more determined posture. Thirdly, the sea-based CJTF HQ also provides unique military flexibility; it is extremely mobile and can perform missions across the spectrum of conflict. SFL routinely trains for everything from peace operations to outright hostilities, publishing best practices after each exercise. And finally, the sea-based HQ carries with it an inherent ability to both sustain and protect itself.

* Article Five of the NATO Treaty provides for collective defense. It stipulates "...that an armed attack against one or more of [the Parties]...shall be considered an attack against them all.